

Dr. *WELLS*'s 6
L E T T E R
TO THE
R E M A R K E R,
In Reference to his
R E M A R K S
ON THE
Doctor's Letter
TO A
Dissenting Parishioner.

Imprimatur,

ARTH. CHARLETT.

Nov. 29. 1706.

O X F O R D,

Printed by *Leon. Lichfield*, for *John Stephens*
Bookseller: And are to be Sold by *James*
Knapton at the *Crown* in *St. Paul's Church-*
yard, **L O N D O N.** 1706.

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Dr. *W E L L S*'s
L E T T E R
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R E M A R K E R.

S I R,

YOUR Remarks on my Letter to a Dissenting Parishioner are now also come to my hands, wherein there occurs so much of False Arguing, of False Interpretation, of False Doctrine, and of other Disingenuous and Foul Dealing, that to take notice and lay open at once All the said particulars, would swell an Answer to a considerable Volume, and so render it on many accounts very Unfit to serve the Good end I am aiming at, even the Instruction of the Common Dissenters, more especially *Those of my own Parish.*

On these considerations it becomes Necessary in order to the Fuller and Clearer Discovery of the Truth to the Common Reader, that the Method I proposed in my Former Letter to you should be followed by us in Reviewing also *these your Last Remarks*, namely of *Debating One point at a time.*

Now the Whole of the Controversy between us may I think be reduced to these Two general Questions, *viz.* First, *Whether Presbyterian Ordination be not Invalid?* Secondly, *Whether the Separation of the Dissenters from the Church of England be not Schismatical:*

4 *Dr. Wells's Letter to the Remarker.*

these *Two Questions* take in *All* the particulars contained in my *Letters*, and therefore the *Discussing* of the said *Questions* will give us occasion to *Discuss All* the said particulars, One after the Other.

Your *Publishing* in the *First* place your *Remarks* on my *Letter* to a *Dissenting Teacher* (the *Principal* design whereof is to shew the *Invalidity* of *Presbyterian Ordination*) has *Determined* me to *Begin* with *That Question* *First*; and accordingly I have in my *Former Letter* sent you such *Theses*, as (tho' *Few* in number, yet) do I think fully and plainly shew the *Invalidity* of *Presbyterian Ordination*. And therefore I am now to *Wait*, either for your *Consent* or *Objections* to them, before I proceed any further.

As soon as that *First Question* is thoroughly debated, I shall proceed to debate the *Second*, and to shew that the *Dissenters Separation* from the *Church of England* is *Schismatical*

The *Great Mischiefs* which attend this *Kingdom*, especially the *Church* within it, being chiefly occasioned by the *Unhappy Difference* of *Opinions* in reference to the *Two Questions* aforesaid: I think *No* man can bestow his time more *Serviceably* either to the *Glory* of *God* or the *Publick Good* of this *Nation*, than in endeavouring to make it *Clearly* appear, on which side of the said *Questions* the *Truth* does lie, and thereby to *Take away* that *Difference* of *opinions*, which *Long* has been and *Still* is the *deplorable Cause* of so *Many* and *Great Mischiefs*; and on these considerations I am most *Willing* and *Ready* to take *Any pains*, which may conduce to so *Happy* an end.

There are *Two* or *Three Particulars*, which I cannot but judge it *Requisite* to take notice of here, that so the *Common Reader* may be *Freed* from *Continuing* to *Entertain* such *Hard thoughts* as he may otherwise have of *Me*, and whereby he may possibly be so far *Prejudiced*, as not to *Allow* what I shall write a *Candid* and *Fair Consideration*.

Whereas

Whereas you set me forth in several places, particularly in the First and Last Paragraphs of your Remarks on a Letter to a Dissenting Parishioner, as a most Uncharitable Fellow on account of the Damning Sentences which I pass upon you and your party: could I but prevail upon you to make use of Moderation (which though you and your party Talk so Much of, yet you seem to understand very Little, and to Practice much Less) and with Coolness of Temper to consider of the Matter, I perswade my self that you would quickly perceive, that you speak very improperly, not to say, Falsely, when you affirm that I pass Damning Sentences upon you. You cannot but your self Own (p. 60. of your Remarks on my Letter to Mr. Dowley) that Any Sin, and consequently Schism, is in it self of a Destructive, Damning nature; and this I suppose you Own (as well as I) because the Scripture plainly declares so much. Whence it follows that either you as well as I pass Damning Sentences upon Schismatics; or else that 'tis neither you nor I, but in reality the Scripture, that passes damning Sentences against Schismatics; and What either you or I do, when we say that Schismatics are in a State of Damnation, can possibly amount to no more than a Declaration of the Damning Sentences passed by the Scripture on Schismatics. This being so, it will follow that (supposing I should be mistaken in the Application, yet) the Utmost I can be Guilty of in Applying to the Dissenters the Damning Sentences passed by the Scripture on Schismatics, is only a bare Error of Judgment, and there is not the Least ground for Accusing me of Uncharitableness: Nay on the contrary there is very Good Reason to attribute what I do in this case to my most Tender Christian Charity. For as a Parent's being Anxiously concerned for the Welfare of his Child, and therefore Fearful (tho' there be in reality no just Cause for such a fear) lest the Child's doing This or That should Hurt it, is always interpreted a certain and infallible sign of the Parent's (not Un-

6 Dr. Wells's Letter to the Remarker.

kindness, but) extraordinary Kindness and most Tender Love and Care for the Child: so in likeness of reason My Anxious care for the Eternal welfare of my Dissenting Parishioners, and My Fear (tho' there should be in reality no just cause for such my Fear) lest they should by their Separation hurt and destroy themselves Eternally, should be likewise interpreted or looked upon to proceed (not from my great Uncharitableness, but rather) from my Great and most Tender charity to them. Surely had I no charity for the Dissenters, I should by no means take All this pains for their Eternal good, and that without the Prospect (as I can truly say) of any other Recompence in this World than Doing them Good. And I cannot but think, and I perswade my self that All Sober persons will think so too, that it would be a much Stronger Argument for my Great Uncharitableness to my Dissenting Parishioners and others, could I sit down very Contentedly, and without shewing any manner of Regret or Concern see them Going directly (as I think) the Broad way which leads to Destruction. And thus I leave it to the Impartial Reader to consider, whether what I have here alledged, be not Abundantly sufficient to Clear me from the charge of Uncharitableness and to Demonstrate my Great Charity to the Dissenters; and tho' Common People may run into such Gross mistakes, yet methinks One, Sir, of your Education should be Able to Distinguish Better, as to the True Motive which influences Me in this matter.

Having had Occasion to mention what you your self own (p. 60. of your Remarks on my Letter to Mr. D.) to wit, That Schism is in it self of a Destructive Damning Nature; I cannot but go on to take notice of what you there say in the very next Sentence, "We know they have a Merciful God to deal with, who knows how to make Allowances for the Prejudices of Education, or the Byass that the Vogue of the World and Interest do often, in some measure, give to Men that

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"are yet truly sincere and upright. Now here is I think *Latitudinarian Divinity* with a Witness. What Wicked Practices may not be Countenanced, and even Encouraged by such sort of Doctrine? That God will of his Free Mercy alone make Allowances for the *Byass* that (to pass by the Prejudice of Education and *Vogue of the World*) Interest does give to Men, and that Interest does often, in some measure, give a *Byass* to Men, that are yet truly Sincere and Upright, are two such False and Pernicious Doctrines, as I thought Any one would have been Ashamed to Own Publickly, though he might be so Ill a Man as to entertain them Secretly. They are I confess very agreeable to the Doctrine of the *Turkish Alcoran*, but altogether disagreeable to the Doctrine of the Gospel, or even to the Natural Dictates of Right Reason. That True Sincerity and Uprightness is incapable of Receiving any *Byass* from Interest, is a Truth so evident to common Understandings, that the usual *medium* or Argument made use of even by Common People, when they would prove a Man to be truly Sincere and Upright, is this, that he will not in any measure be byassed by his Interest. And as for Scripture, our Saviour plainly affirms *Matt. 6. 24. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon*: But you, Sir, on the contrary teach in Effect, *Ye can serve God and Mammon*; for to be Byass'd by Interest so far as to be thereby kept from Discovering or Practising ones Duty to God is no other than to serve Mammon. Thus you may see, how disagreeable this your Doctrine is both to Scripture and Right Reason; and therefore it cannot be reasonably suppos'd, that even God's Mercy will incline him to make any Allowances for the *Byass* of Interest without a particular and severe Repentance for the same.

Let us now consider a little, how vastly Pernicious the Consequence of this your Doctrine is, even in relation to Common Honesty between Man and Man. For is it not very easy and natural for Any Common Person among your Followers, that hears you thus

8 *Dr. Wells's Letter to the Remarker.*

teach, that a Man may be in some measure byass'd by his Interest, and yet be truly sincere and upright, is it not I say very easy and natural for Any one (that has been thus taught by you) to infer from it, that he may in his Common Dealings be in some measure byass'd by his Interest and yet be a truly sincere and upright Christian? To give two or three Instances: May not One that has been thus taught by you, be induced thereby to think, that when he is ~~Selling~~ any thing, he may (rather than lose the Sale of it) be so far byass'd by his Interest, as to conceal from the Buyer the Faults of what he sells, and to put off that which he Knows to be Unsound for Sound, and yet be truly sincere and upright? May not One of your Hearers think, that though he has downright sold a thing to One, yet if he afterwards happens to meet with a Better Chapman, and the thing is not yet actually Delivered to the Former Buyer, he may let his Interest byass him in such a measure, as not to stand to his Former Bargain, but to sell the thing to his Second and Better Chapman, and yet remain a truly sincere and upright Christian? Nay supposing this same Hearer of yours should take up Any thing that is strayed or lost, and should afterwards be enquired of whether he can Give any tales or tidings of the said thing, may he not by this your Doctrine be induced to think, that he may let his Interest byass him in such a measure, as to use the Little word No instead of *Tea*, and yet remain a truly sincere and upright Christian? Once more, may not One of your Good Dames be induced by your Doctrine to think that she may be byass'd by her Interest in such a measure as to sell the Worst sort of Butter and Cheese for the Best sort, and withall to make Bad or False Weight, and yet remain a truly sincere and upright Christian? I hope, Sir, by this time you begin to perceive, of what pernicious Consequence your Doctrine is even to Common Honesty, and therefore without doubt to Men's Eternal State hereafter. Indeed I have heard it often said, that upon

Obser-

Observation it has appeared, that the *Dissenting* Party is (generally) made up of such Persons as seem to be most influenced by the *Byass of Interest*; and you have given now but too just Reason to think, that there may be More of Truth in the Observation, than I was willing to believe Afore. And perhaps there will not need, for the future, much Wonder at the Measures taken by your Party, and why it should be so Hard to work upon them in such Plain Cases, since this same Doctrine of yours, which you have been pleased now to communicate to the Publick, does so excellently *Unriddle* the whole matter. And for my own part I shall, for the future, be so far from wondering at *your being Followed*, that I shall rather wonder that you have not much Greater *Multitudes of Followers*, since this your Doctrine is so highly agreeable to *Flesh and Blood*, and you stick not to persuade Men that they may in some measure be *byass'd by their temporal Interest* so as not to know or practice their Duty here, and yet may safely hope in God's Mercy, that they shall not do thereby any Damage to their *Spiritual Interest* hereafter. In short, Sir, this One Doctrine of yours gives me such a Taste of your Principles, that I should Refuse to Continue a Debate with One of such Loose Notions till you had Publickly Recanted the same, was it not that I look beyond you to the Good of Others in your Party, who (I hope) are not tainted with the same pernicious Doctrine. I shall shut up this Point with expressing my Great and Sincere Charity to you, by most earnestly beseeching God to make you timely sensible, that *True Sincerity and Uprightness* is altogether Inconsistent with the *Byass of Interest*, and therefore to give you Grace, that you may not suffer your self to be in any measure *byass'd by Interest*, out of any ill-grounded Hopes that God's Mercy will hereafter make Allowances for it.

I shall take notice at present but of One particular more, which is that wherewith you close your Re-
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10 *Dr. Wells's Letter to the Remarker.*

marks on my Letter to a Dissenting Parishioner. Where-
as then you say, that "We, *viz.* the Dissenters, are
"not able on our Side to End the Division. We are
"heartily sorry, not only that the *Papists* may reap
"Advantages hereby, but for many other Mischiefs
"that are owing to the same Cause. But we cannot
"part with our Consciences to keep out Popery, nor
"must we do Evil that Good may come of it? I
would fain know for what reason you are not able on
your side to end the Division. There are no hard or sinful
Terms required of you by the Church, as I have al-
ready shewn and shall more particularly shew, as we
go over again Debating Singly the several Points in
Controversy. So that I cannot possibly think of Any
thing that can make you not able on your side to end
the Division, except it be that same scurvy *Byass* of
Interest, which you think consistent with true Sincerity
and Uprightness. Neither are you desired to part with,
but to rectify your Conscience, (and the way to Rectifie
it is to Free it altogether from the *Byass* of *Interest*) in
order to keep out Popery; nor are you desired to do
Evil, but to put an End to Evil, namely the Great
Evil of Separation, that so Good may come of it, namely
the Great Good of Keeping out Popery.

Pray consider with your self, whether the Old Pu-
ritans or Non-Conformists were not as truly Zealous
against Popery as you can be; and that albeit they
did Dislike many things as you do, yet they judged
it nevertheless their Bounden Duty not to Begin a
Division from the Church, because they plainly fore-
saw it would give Advantages to Popery. And there-
fore the Present Dissenters, tho' they do Dislike many
things in our Church, yet why are they not able on
their side to put an end to a Division, which they find
by Experience gives Advantages to Popery? How
comes there to be such a vast Difference between the
Practice of the Old and Present Non-Conformists as to
the matter of Separation? I can account for it but this
way, namely that the Old Non-Conformists were truly
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Sincere and Upright and not byassed with *Private Interest*, but with the *Publick Good* of the Church, which enabled them (notwithstanding their *Scruples*) *on their side not to begin a Division*; whereas the *Present Non-Conformists* are influenced by the *Byass of Private Interest* more than of the *Publick Good* of the Church, and 'tis the said mischievous *Byass of Private Interest*, which makes them *not able on their side to end the Division*, because it will *not permit them to be truly Sincere and Upright* in the matter.

And this gives me Occasion by the way to illustrate unto you the Design or Meaning of my *First Instance* under the Title of the *Agreement between some Principles and Practices of the Dissenters and Papists*, viz. *The Papists make it their Business to seduce and draw off the People from the Communion of the Church of England. The Dissenters make it their Business to do the very same.* Whereas then you Remark, that this is *admirably Profound*, I must now in my turn Remark, that if it be so to you, it comes to be so, because your *Intellectuals* are *admirably Shallow*. For though the *Papists* draw Men one way, and the *Dissenters* draw them quite the contrary, yet since they Both draw from the *Church of England*; therefore there must be (in your Phrase) a marvellous Consent and Agreement between them, as to the Point wherein I produce the said Instance to prove such their Agreement, to wit, in their Common design of *Weakening the Church of England*, which is (by the Confession of all Foreign Protestants) the main Bulwark of the *Reformed Religion* against *Popery*. Now in this respect, as the *Present Non-Conformists* exactly *Agree* with the *Papists*, so as I have observed they altogether *Disagree* with the *Old Non-Conformists*; who though they *Disliked*, yet would not *Divide*, because they would not *Strengthen Popery*, by *Weakening the great Bulwark* against it, the *Church of England*. Hence it appears that you and your Party are at present advanced a very considerable step nearer to the Measures

12 Dr. Wells's Letter to the Remarker.

Measures and Design of the *Papists*, than the Old *Non-Conformists*; and that therefore 'twas not without very good reason that I took particular notice of the foreſaid Instance of Agreement between you and the *Papists*, in order to Awaken the Common People to ſee, how the Leaders of the *Dissenting* Party are continually making nearer and nearer Approaches to the Method laid down by the *Papists* for bringing in *Popery*, namely, *Weakening* more and more, and at laſt Ruining the Church of England. Moreover there is ſtill a Queſtion to be put to you, which will I think carry enough in it to diſcover further your Agreement with the *Papists* in the forementioned peculiar Design of Destroying the Church of England. For if as you ſay, *All Parties think themſelves in the Right, and Like to have Others of their Mind*; why then doth not this ſame Principle ſet the ſeveral Sectaries among the *Dissenters*, as eagerly One againſt the Other, as againſt the Church of England? Surely there is as great and greater Difference between *Presbyterians*, &c. and *Quakers*, than between *Presbyterians* and *Us Church-men*; and therefore why do not the *Presbyterians* or *Independents* think fit to beſtow ſome of their Pains in Drawing ſome from the *Quakers* to themſelves? Nay, why do we never hear of any *Dissenting Teacher* that beſtows ſome Pains in order to Draw Men from the *Papists* to themſelves? How can ſuch Practice be accounted for, but that the *Presbyterians* and *Independents* have a much greater Spleen at the Church of England, than at the *Quakers* or even the very *Papists*? And it will follow, that in ſhort the *Papists* and ſeveral Sectaries among Us do *All agree* in this; namely, in *Weakening the Church of England*, the great Bulwark of *Proteſtantiſm* againſt *Popery*, and therefore in *Strengthening Popery* it ſelf. What has been ſaid I hope will be ſufficient to illuſtrate the Instance of Agreement abovementioned, ſo far as to make it Level to your Capacity. I ſhall only here obſerve that if what you ſay (p. 43.)

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in Reference to my *Postscript* in general, namely, that it carries in it *Superabundant Silliness and Weakness* be true, then methinks it should occasion you rather to *Laugh* than to be so very *Angry* at it as to say, that therein is *no want of Malice and Bitter Zeal*: which Expressions plainly shew, that the said *Postscript* (notwithstanding such its *superabundant Silliness and Weakness*) does carry however in it somewhat that Galls and Nettles you more than ordinary. And therefore in good time I may shew more of the Like *superabundant Silliness and Weakness* in a much Larger Specimen of *Agreements between the Dissenters and Papists*.

As to the Persons by whom *Popery* is at present kept out of this Kingdom, (if it can be said to be kept out, when there is Reason to fear it is rather daily Getting Ground within it,) I think they are the very Same as have ever since the Reformation kept it out, namely, the Members of the Church of England. I have observed in my *Testimonies* p. 43. what Vast Ground *Popery* got during the Low Estate of the Church of England, and the Usurpation of *Fanaticism*, especially of your Darling Favourite *Independency*; and should ever such a like Fatal time come again, 'tis Easy to infer that *Popery* would again get the like Advantages. Certain I am, that as the Distinction of *High and Low Church-men* was at first set up by the Enemies of Our Church, and thereby of the Protestant Religion; so you, Sir, and All others that industriously keep up the said Distinction, do take the way not to keep out but to bring in *Popery*. For (to borrow an Expression of your own, p. 40. "'Tis too plain that a *Popish* design is at the bottom of that Noise and Clamour which has lately been made in this Nation about *High and Low Church-men*, there being no solid Reason for the said Distinction, but it crying really in it self Downright Non-sense. Indeed you are pleased to use the Term of *Moderate Church-men* instead of *Low Church-men*, but this doth

doth not at all mend the matter, or make the Distinction carry in it a Grain of Better Sense.

For my self, such as I am Known to (and I have the Honour to be Known not to a Few of the Highest Ranks in the Kingdom) know that the Leading Principle or Main Conduct of my Life has been *not to Abett or make*, but to endeavour to *make up* and Unite different *Parties*; and that of my Own Inclination I am no *Lover of Disputes*, nor *Fond* of being engaged in *Controversy*. 'Twas this Natural Bent of my Temper, which made me choose this Retirement, (though it will scarce amount to a Tolerable Competency) as hoping it would Remove me from being Ever concern'd in *Parties* or *Controversies*. But the Wisdom of God has thought fit to let me meet with an Entire Disappointment herein, and to permit things to happen so, (perhaps to Try the Sincerity of my Obedience to him) that I should not be Able faithfully to discharge my *Pastoral* Office without *directly crossing the Natural Bent* of my Inclinations. And having inserted this short Paragraph to shew you, that you are quite mistaken in me, if you take me to be a *Party-man* (as you were afore in taking me to be a *Pluralist*,) I shall now proceed for the Sake and Benefit of the Common Reader to lay open the Absurdity of the so much Abused Distinction of *High* and *Low* Church-men.

He then that professing himself to be a *Member of the Church of England*, does accordingly keep up Conscientiously and Strictly to its *Doctrines*, *Rites*, and *Ceremonies*, the same does act herein *not* a whit *Higher* than his Duty requires, and therefore to act thus *High*, or to be in this Sense an *High* Churchman, is no other in reality than to be a *True* Churchman, and therefore surely not at all Blameable but very Commendable. On the other hand, He that professes himself to be a *Member of the Church of England*, and yet is far from keeping up to its *Doctrines*, *Rites*, and *Ceremonies*, the same acts here-
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in much *Lower* (or as you are pleased to term it, much *more Moderately*) than his Bounden Duty requires, and therefore to act thus *Lowly* or *Moderately*, or to be in this Sense a *Low* or *Moderate* Church-man, is no other in reality than to be a *False* Church-man, and therefore surely not Commendable but very Blameable. Now this being the plainest and most Natural Meaning of the forementioned Terms, as 'tis Certain on one hand that the *High* Church-man, in the Sense explained, is most conducive to the *Keeping out of Popery*, as being *True to That Church* which has all along since the *Reformation* (and that by the Universal Acknowledgment of Foreign *Protestants*) been the chief Bulwark of the *Reformed Religion*; so it needs not be Wondered at on the other hand, if the *Low* or *Moderate* Church-man, in the Sense above explained, should *Unite with the Dissenters*, and by Consequence with the *Papists*, to bring in *Popery*, since he is *False to That Church* which has ever since the *Reformation* been the main Bulwark of *Protestantism* against *Popery*. You may see therefore, that I am altogether at a Loss to know, what Forced Sense you can put upon the forementioned Terms of *High* and *Low* (or *Moderate*) Church-men; and you would have done well to have Explained your self more fully in this Matter. However to make what Guess I can at your Meaning, if you mean by a *High* Church-man *One that will not yield to Any Alterations* (in things which being in themselves *Indifferent* admit of Alteration) on never so good and just Occasion; then *Charity* will oblige me to think, that there is *No True Church-man* that is (to use the Modish Expression) such an *High Flyer*; and on the other hand if by a *Low* or *Moderate* Church-man, you mean *One that is ready to give up All or to yield to Alterations* (not only in things *Indifferent* in their own Nature, but also in such as are *Fundamental* and *Necessary*, and that) *without good or just Occasion*, then *Charity* will oblige me to think, that *No True Church-man* can be thus *Low* and *Moderate*.

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Let us then go on and see, what things are *Fundamental* or *Necessary* and so *Not to be altered on Any Occasion*; and what are *Otherwise* and therefore capable of *Alteration on weighty and just Occasions*. Of the *First* sort is the *Threefold Order of the Ministry*, for as much as (according to what our Church Teaches) *It is evident unto all Men diligently reading Holy Scripture and Ancient Authors, that from the Apostles time there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church; Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.* So that *No one* can be esteemed a *True Member of the Church of England*, that is not sincerely Ready to part with his *Life* rather than the said *Apostolical Constitution of the Threefold Order*. And then as for *Liturgies or Forms of Prayer*, though they are not *Absolutely Necessary* in themselves, yet "it becomes *Necessary* (to use * *Mr. Calvin's* words) that the *Publick Prayers* should be *Stated* or *Fixed*, from which it may not be *Lawful* for any *Minister* to *Vary* in the *Exercise of his Function*, "as well in *Consideration of the Ignorance and Weakness* of some, as that it may *Certainly* appear how *All the Churches* *Agree* among themselves, and "withal that there may be a *Stop* put to the *Giddy Lightness* of some who affect *Novelties*. Now the *Three* forementioned *Reasons* being such as will *Always* be of *Force*, 'twill *Always* be *Requisite* and *Necessary* to *Retain* our *Excellent Liturgy*, and therefore *No True Church-man* can come so *Low* as to *part with it*, though out of mere *Condescension* to the *Weakness* of some, he may and will *charitably* condescend to the *Alteration of some Expressions* therein contained. Besides the *Two* forementioned *Particulars*, to wit, that of the *Threefold Order* in the *Ministry*, and *Our Forms of Prayer*; *All other Rites and Ceremonies* used in our Church and scrupled at by the *Dissenters* (as the *Cross* in *Baptism*, *God-fathers* and *God-mothers*, *Kneeling* at the *Sacrament*, *Surplice*, &c.) are so far *Not Fundamental or Necessary* as to admit of *Alteration*

* *Epist. ad Protest. Angl.*

upon *weighty* and *just* Occasions. And therefore I cannot but think that *Every True Church-man* is charitably disposed to condescend to such *Alterations* as shall be *Requisite* in these Matters on *weighty* and *just* Occasions.

'Tis therefore to be considered in the Last place, What is or is not a *just* Occasion for such *Alterations*.

First then, Nothing seems fit to be reckoned as a *just* Occasion, but the Attainment of a *Greater Good* by the *Alterations* made than can be attained without them. Now forasmuch as the *Church of England* is the excellent Mean between the two Extreame of *Po-pery* and *Fanaticism*, and ought to be *Equally* concerned for the Gaining of *Papists* as well as *Dissenters* (forasmuch as the Souls of the Former are as precious in the sight of God as of the Latter) therefore it is to be Duly considered, whether the *Alterations* contended for by your party will not do as much Harm one way by Shutting the Door Closer than needs be against the *Papists*, as it may do Good by Opening the Door Wider than needs be to the *Dissenters*. To which must be Added, that such *Alterations* may become a *stumbling-block* to some that are at present of our Own Communion, and who may possibly be so Weak as to think more Highly of the things to be laid Aside than they Ought, and therefore go over from Us to the *Papists* upon this account. Wherefore if by the *Alterations* contended for by your party in things indifferent is meant a *Total Abolition* or *Laying aside* thereof, then 'tis evident from what has been here alledged, that from such an *Alteration* may ensue as much, if not a great deal more, Hurt than Good to the Souls of men and to our Own Church: And therefore as there can be No *Just* occasion for such *Alterations*, so the Farthest *Alterations* that can with a good Conscience be consented to by a *True Church-man* even in reference to things *Not-necessary* is only this, that Every person

may be left to his Own liberty, or to follow his Own persuasion, in these particulars, to wit, to *have God-fathers* or *have none*, to have his Child signed or not signed with the Cross, &c.

Secondly, There can be no good or just Occasion for Alterations, but when a Certain Good will follow. 'Tis therefore to be enquired whether the Good aimed at by such Alterations or Concessions will Certainly follow on the side of the Dissenters, for whose sake and to whom such Alterations and Concessions are made. Now before this can appear, these Particulars must be considered :

1. Whether it will not become Requisite to this end, That All Dissenters that are come to Years of Discretion should, in the first place, give it under their hands, that *such Alterations and Concessions will satisfy them*, and should by some or other Valuable Obligation strictly engage themselves to *Leave off their Separation* as soon as ever the said Concessions should be made and they left at their Liberty in the forementioned Particulars.

2. 'Tis to be considered further, whether though All the Present Dissenters that are at Age of Discretion should hereby be brought over (which is indeed a very Large Supposition, but I am willing to suppose the Utmost) yet it may not be reasonably feared, that in Ten or Twelve Years a New Generation may arise, which may after all find Dislike with the Settled Form of Religion, and demand Further Alterations, and if not gratified break out again into a New Separation. And that this is no other than a very Supposable Case, I shall shew from a Twofold Consideration, One of *what has been Already*, the Other of *what may be inferr'd from the Dissenter's own Received Principles*.

As to *what has been Already* I shall tell you, Sir, *what I have heard*, (and I take this Freedom because

'tis no other than you your self take with me) I have heard then, that in the Reign of a certain Great and Glorious Queen the *Non-Conformists* applied themselves to a Chief Minister of State for his Interest in obtaining some Concessions to be made them in order to their joining with the Church. The said Minister of State desired them to put in Writing *All that they Requested*. Which being done, and the *Non-conformists* attending at the time appointed to know the Event, the said Minister of State acquainted them that through hurry of Business he had mislaid the *First Draught* of their Requests, and therefore desired them to transcribe Another Draught or Copy from the Original which he supposed they kept by them. A *Second Draught* was hereupon brought, and the *Non-conformists* again attending at the time appointed, the Minister of State informed them, that he had now found their *First Draught*, and having had the Curiosity to compare the *Two Draughts* or Copies together, he found them so *Extravagantly Different*, that he plainly perceived that there was no Likelihood of bringing the matter to an happy Issue, since they did *not Themselves know their own minds* or *what would Content them*, but made Requests so *widely different* in so *very short a time*; and therefore upon the whole He could by no means Appear in their Behalf.

But now that you may not be Peevish with me for this same story, or think I build wholly upon this Precedent (tho' Precedents are allowed to be of Excellent use in many cases) I shall subjoyn a very strong argument drawn from *your own Principles* for the *Great Uncertainty* there is that *Any good* should come of the *Alterations* you contend for. 'Tis then, as you your self own p. 63. of your Remarks on my Letter to Mr. Dowley, *One Received Principle of the Dissenters* that *no man or body of men are to be the standard of Truth, and that their Notions are not to be enslaved to the Sentiments of those whom they most value*. Whence it will follow, that though such Alterations should be now made as

20 *Dr. Wells's Letter to the Remarker.*

All the Present Dissenters that are capable of judging for themselves, may judge *Sufficient to End the Separation*, yet the Next Generation that is coming up, may think that they are by no means to look on the *body of the Present Dissenters* to be the *standard of Truth*, or that *their Notions are to be enslaved to the Sentiments of the Present Dissenters*, and therefore may very likely make *New Demands* and *begin a New Separation*.

Thus it has been largely shewn what is likely to be the *Effects of Alteration*, and how far a *True Church-man* can and out of a charitable Condescension to *Weak persons* doubtless will go upon a good and just occasion in reference to matters *not Fundamental*, or *so Necessary* but that they may admit of *Alteration*. But then after all 'tis plain, Sir, that you for your Part, and 'tis to be suspected and feared that *Many more of your party*, will not be satisfied without *Altering Fundamentals* and things *Necessary to be retained*, namely, the *Threesfold Order of the Ministry* and the *Use of the Common-Prayer*, &c. which *No True Church-man* can consent and give way to.

From what has been said then you may learn, how far 'tis truly in the *Power of the Church* to *End the Division*; and that the *Church* is very *Willing and Ready* to do *All that is in its Power* to bring about so happy an End. Whereas you add, p. 48. or it is rather in the *power of the Parliament* to *remove those things that keep the breach wide open*; Pray what do you mean by the things which keep the *Breach wide open*? If thereby is meant your being *Left at liberty* as to things *indifferent*, the *Church* is *Ready of it self* to comply so far on just occasion. And therefore as there is no need to have recourse to the *Power of the Parliament* any further than may be necessary to *Confirm or make Good in law* such *Concessions of the Church*; so 'tis not to be supposed that so *Wise a Body* as the *Parliament* will use the *Rigour of its Power* to *Force the Church* even to such *Concessions*, when there is no *weighty and just occasion* for them. If by

things

things that keep the breach wide open, you mean the *Threefold Ministerial Order*, or the *Use of the Liturgy or Common-Prayer*. then the Church cannot yield to the *Destroying or Taking away things so Fundamental and Necessary*; and it may be rationally presumed that the *Wisdom of the Parliament* will not exert its *Power* to so high a degree, as to unhinge the *Constitution of our Church*, not only because so to do would be to *Overthrow an Apostolical Constitution*, but also because it is not yet out of memory, what *Horrid Confusions and Calamities* overflowed the *Civil State* upon such an *Overthrow of the Fundamental Constitution of the Ecclesiastical State*.

So that after all it wholly lies on your side to *End the Division*, and *whatever the Advantage be which the Papists gain by our Divisions*, it is wholly chargeable on the *Non-conformist side*. And therefore as you are able on your side, and ought, to *end the Division*; so the chief reason I can think of for your *not being Willing* to do so, is that *Scurvy Byass of Interest*, or rather that *Scurvy Notion*, that the *Byass of Interest* is consistent with *True Sincerity and Uprightness*; and that *God will make Allowance* for It, be the *Consequence of It* what it will, even no other than the *Continuance or Keeping up a Schism or Needless Separation*. Indeed as long as you are *Byass'd with Interest*, so long you may very truly say that you are *Not Able on your side* to end the *Division*, but could you be but persuaded to *lay aside the Byass of Interest*, and to be influenced on the contrary with an *Unbyass'd Sincerity and Uprightness*, I doubt not but you would then quickly find your selves *Not only Able* on your side, but also *Willing*, to *End the Division*, and so to put an *End to All the Unhappy Consequences thereof*.

Wherefore I think I can't conclude this Letter with a more suitable Petition for you, than that *God would give you Grace, that Forsaking All Covetous desires, and Inordinate Love of Riches, you may truly perceive and know what things belong to the Peace of the Church, and*
may

22 *Dr. Wells's Letter to the Remarker.*

may Faithfully follow after the same, to the Glory of God, the Prosperity of the Church here upon Earth, and your Own Everlasting Comfort in the World to come: Which God of his infinite mercy grant for Christ his sake. Amen.

So prays, Sir,

Your most Affectionate and

Faithful Servant in Christ,

Cotesbach, Nov. 27th.

1706.

EDW. WELLS.

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There is now in the Press, and will speedily be Publisht, *The Common Christian Rightly and Plainly Instructed in the Grounds of Christianity: or, An Exposition on the Church-Catechism, more particularly adapted to the Capacities and Circumstances of the Common People.* By *Edw. Wells, D. D.*

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